



State of Louisiana

Department of Environmental Quality



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DEQ Denies Thunder Oaks Raceway Permits

Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality today denied water and air permits for the Thunder Oaks Raceway in Houma because of a natural gas pipeline that runs across the site of the proposed racetrack.

Part of the permitting process required Houma Services, Inc., the company that applied for the permits, to submit an Environmental Assessment Statement for the proposed racetrack. Houma Services failed to address certain requirements of the Environmental Assessment Statement.

An issue that was not addressed is whether there are alternative sites to the proposed site that would offer more protection to human health or the environment. Houma Services Inc. has not addressed the hazards of the pipeline on the proposed site or how the hazards could be avoided or minimized in their Environmental Assessment Statement.

Another issue not adequately addressed in the Environmental Assessment Statement was whether there are alternative projects that offer more protection to human health or the environment than the proposed facility.

DEQ cited the Public Trustee provisions under Article IX of the Louisiana Constitution in denying the permits. "We have a duty to protect the public's health and the environment," said Assistant Secretary Bliss Higgins. "If that pipeline were to crack from the pressure of the racetrack, cars, or a parking lot, there could be serious implications to the public and to the environment."

A report done by an independent engineering firm for Columbia Gulf Transmission, owners of the pipeline, found that the pipeline would need significant upgrading in order to withstand the stress created by the racetrack.

Houma Services Inc. has not signed an agreement with Columbia Gulf Transmission to make any changes to the pipeline that would be needed for the racetrack activities on the proposed site.
